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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; IRAQ; CHINA-TAIWAN; 07/16/07

11. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend international stories cover the impact of the situation in Iraq on the Bush administration; and the dispute between China and Taiwan in Latin America.

12. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Iraq - when the puppeteer abandons its puppet"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, international analyst of leading "Clarín," writes (07/14) "... Reportedly, the Bush administration is willing to revisit the story of Vietnam in its withdrawal (from Iraq) by leaving the local government it established in Baghdad at the mercy of its own fate..."

"The civil war between Sunnis and Shiites seems endless; the weakness of the current Iraqi situation is more evident in the death squads than in the imposition of law and the corruption is as impossible to cover up as the sun is with one's hand. However, more important, there is an increasing feeling in Washington that Al Maliki has placed himself at the center of the problem and that he may no longer be part of the solution..."

"... Bush's political situation is more than complex. With 18 remaining months in power, he is at the lowest point of his approval rating (29 percent), with the greatest rejection of war (79 percent), and the suspicion that by the time the US Congress meets again in September, Democrats will lead a bigger offensive against his administration now that Republicans are starting to believe that supporting (Bush) is as useless as supporting Maliki..."

"Bush has publicly asked for more time for his strategy in Iraq, but no one can find it... However, there is something else - with admirable stubbornness, Bush has again sounded the alarm of a terrorist threat."

- "Wind"

Santiago O'Donnell, international columnist of left-of-center "Página 12," opines (07/15) "... With the election campaign already launched, the Congress 'on fire,' the chaos in Iraq far from being solved, Bush has no choice but make use of the Iraq Study Group's conclusions, which were created by the same legislators that harass him today.

"Last year, the Study Group concluded that the time had come to abandon the idea of rebuilding Iraqi institutions. In exchange for this, it proposed to withdraw most of the troops and focus on fighting terrorism with the cooperation of uncomfortable neighbors like Syria and Iran. It also set deadlines for the beginning of the (troop) withdrawal. Little by little and grudgingly, Bush started to

honor recommendations or at least to pretend he was honoring them. He also realized he will not win the war, though in Thursday's preliminary report to Congress he stated the contrary. With a popularity rate lower than that of Nixon at the time of Watergate and with primary elections just around the corner, (Bush's) luck has already been decided.

"Bush seeks to maintain some modicum of power and avoid the humiliation imposed by the deadlines and modalities of an unavoidable withdrawal. Nonetheless, politics often shows no mercy to losers. Bob Dylan said it a long time ago - you do not need to be a meteorologist to know what the direction of the wind is."

- "Chinese dispute in Central America"

Gustavo Sierra, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (07/15) "The old dispute between China and Taiwan over the latter's official recognition took its battle to Latin America. Taiwan needs the support of at least 24 countries to keep its status as an independent island and one-third of the allies it had is in Central America. However, Costa Rica's decision to break ties with Taipei and start a relationship with the Beijing administration threatens this alliance and could trigger a real domino effect on the rest of the isthmus.

"As usual, the reason for the dispute is money. So far, Central-Americans support Taiwan's claim in exchange for investment. However, Beijing's power all over the world and the region is obvious. Between 1999 and 2005, Chinese imports of Latin American products increased six times..."

"The dispute could well benefit the region. To prevent the abandonment of other allies, Taiwan announced a 7.2 million dollar investment in Guatemala."

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